

ADMONITIONS
FOR
SUNDAY-SCHOOLS;

WRITTEN FOR A PARTICULAR PARISH

AND NOW PUBLISHED

FOR GENERAL USE.

By A LAYMAN.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N :

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author hopes he shall not be thought to intrude in the clerical office, by the following publication. His view was, to furnish the children of the Sunday-school, in the parish where he resides, with a few plain, practical lessons, for them to read over in a winter's evening: but by no means to divert their attention from the better instructions they receive from the pulpit. And, though this work was designed principally for one parish, he flatters himself that, if approved, it may be of equal use in others.



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ADMONITION I.

3d Epistle of St. JOHN, 4th verse.

*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children
walk in truth.*

BY "Truth" is here meant the word of God: and to "walk in truth" signifies to live according to that word; to make the holy scripture the rule of our lives and actions. So to "walk with God," is the same as to obey God, or to keep his commandments:—to "walk uprightly," is to live honestly:—to "walk in love," is to live in brotherly love one with another, and to do all the good we can by acts of love and kindness:—to walk in Christ," or "in the light," is to follow Christ, or to govern our lives and conduct by the light of his gospel; to imitate his example, and to obey his laws. And surely there can be no greater joy to parents, and to all who have the care of children, than to see them (as the text expresses it) "*walk in truth*"—to find that the pains bestowed upon them have not been bestowed in vain; but that they have made a right use of the instructions they have received, by leading virtuous and good lives. This, my dear children, is the end and design of our taking you into this

school; to train you up in the way of godliness, which is the way of happiness; trusting in the blessing of God on our endeavours, that you may walk therein all the days of your life, and that as you grow in *age* you may "*grow in grace.*"—Our first object was, to prevent your *doing evil*; our next is, to teach you to do well. Ignorance and idleness are the never-failing sources of wickedness and misery. Ignorance of religion, and of our duty, is the worst sort of ignorance: and idleness on the Lord's day is the worst sort of idleness. The design of setting up these schools was to prevent or remove those dreadful evils, by instructing you in religious knowledge, and by keeping you well employed on the day set apart for religious exercises. We saw, with great concern, a number of children in this parish, loitering about on Sundays, instead of going to church, and doing their duty;—some playing—others talking idly, or worse than idly. We now see them decent and orderly: reading their bibles, and other good books; and attending at church regularly twice a day. Those who once knew nothing of God and their duty, now know both, by being instructed in the holy scriptures, which alone will "*make them wise unto salvation.*" What an happy change! How pleasing must it be to your parents! and how peculiarly so to us your instructors, to see you thus walk in the knowledge and practice of religious truth. But remember that this is only the beginning of a good work. You are now but just setting out in the way wherein you should go. It is a good thing to *begin well*:
but

but the great matter is, to *go on* so;—to continue improving in knowledge and goodness;—to be diligent and constant in the performance of your several duties;—not only to spend the *Sabbath* day well, but to spend *every* day well;—to pray to God every day of your lives for his help and protection, and to thank him most humbly and heartily for his blessings already vouchsafed to you;—to be always well employed;—to make yourselves as useful as you can to your parents, and all your other relations and friends;—and to shew your gratitude to us, by making a good use of the benefits you have received from us in this place of religious instruction. This is the return we expect and desire, for the time, and money, and labour, we have bestowed upon you; and great will be our joy and comfort if we receive it. We are pleased indeed with thinking that we have done *our* duty; by putting you in the way of doing *your's*: but it will be a sad disappointment and grief to us, if you fail on your part, and we find that we have been labouring in vain. Our aim is to make you happy: your endeavour must be to make yourselves so; as you certainly may, if you will. Consider often and seriously the great advantages you enjoy, and remember what our blessed Saviour declares, that “to whom much is given, of them shall much be required.” The more has been done for you, the more you must do for yourselves: the more good seed has been sown in your hearts, the more good fruit you must bring forth in your lives and conversations. And

great will be your reward, both in this life and the next, for so doing: in this world, you will have peace of mind and a good conscience, the best of all earthly blessings; and in the world to come, joy and happiness for ever and ever.—To help you forward in the way of salvation (besides our constant prayers to God, and the regular instructions in the school), I have drawn up some short and easy lessons, in the form of Admonitions, for your reading at home; and that they may answer the good end proposed by them, I must beg you to look them over very carefully, and think of them often. And above all, I charge you to pray earnestly to Almighty God, that he will give you understanding to know, and grace to perform, your duty; that he will keep you stedfast and unmoveable in the truth of the gospel; that so both you and we may REJOICE EVERMORE IN THE LORD.

ADMONITION II.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

WHOSE ways? you will naturally ask: for you must certainly desire to find them out: and when you have found them, to walk in those ways all the days of your life. Consult your bible, and there you will find the true answer—Solomon will shew you this most “excellent way.”

In the 13th verse of the chapter from which my text is taken, you will read these words:

“Happy

“ Happy is the man that findeth WISDOM, and the man that getteth UNDERSTANDING.” Now if you want to know what is meant by wisdom and understanding, look again into your bible, Job xxviii. 28. and there you will find, that “ the fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding:” so that wisdom, in scripture language, signifies religion, or godliness. And of *this* it is that Solomon speaks, when he says, “ Her ways are ways of pleasantness”—and, “ all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.” St. Paul in like manner assures us, that “ godliness is profitable unto *all things* :” that is, it has *every* real advantage attending it; “ having the promise of the life that *now is*,” as well as “ of that which *is to come*.” Now one of the good things of this life is pleasure: it is what we all desire and seek after; but what many miss of, because they look for it where it is not to be found. It is indeed to be found only in the way of godliness, or in a life of religion and virtue. This the scripture declares in the plainest manner, and this I hope to convince you of in the following discourse. I will shew you, first, that religion gives us the greatest of all pleasures, which nothing else can give; and, secondly, that it heightens every other pleasure: so that its ways may most properly and truly be called the WAYS OF PLEASANTNESS.

There is an old saying, and a very true one, that “ a good conscience is a continual feast.” The meaning of it is, that a sense or consciousness of doing our duty, or of leading a good and

religious life, gives constant pleasure to the mind, which is the greatest of all feasts. Food to the *body* is pleasant; but that is a short pleasure, and to be had only for a few minutes in the day. But food to the *mind* is lasting: a good conscience is a *continual* pleasure; that never ceases, and never cloyes. The mind is always at work, and giving us either pleasure or pain, according as we do well or ill. Conscience is a voice within us, that will be heard, whether we will or no. It will accuse us, and give us bitter pain and uneasiness, when we neglect or transgress our duty; and it will commend us, and give us great pleasure and comfort, when we do right. We may fly from other people; but we cannot fly from ourselves; we cannot fly from our own hearts; nor from God, who is every where present, who searcheth our hearts, who knoweth all our most secret thoughts and designs, as well as our outward actions. It is he that pours joy and comfort into the heart that is pure and holy, and bitter sorrow and anguish into that which is impure and sinful: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." Take notice of these words,—“then have we confidence towards God:” that is, if our hearts assure us that we do our duty, and live as we ought to do, then we may be assured of God’s love and favour—we may draw near to him in prayer with humble confidence;—we may be certain of being rewarded by him both in this world and the

the next. And, let me ask you, Is not this pleasure? is it not the greatest of all pleasures, to feel our minds easy and happy, and to know that we are in favour with God, who is the author and giver of all goodness! And it is a pleasure we may all have, if we will;—high and low, rich and poor, all are alike capable of being good, and consequently of being happy.—Next to the pleasure of a good conscience, and being in favour with God, is that of being in favour with worthy and good men: and this pleasure you are sure to have by the same means; that is, by leading a religious and virtuous life.—Another pleasure that I think you must feel is, that of making a proper return to us, who have taken pains to bring you into these good ways. You must surely be pleased by giving us pleasure; which you may all do by behaving as you ought, and continuing steady in the performance of your duty. We can have no greater joy than to see and hear of our children “walking in truth.”

I might mention other pleasures in life, of a lesser sort and value; all which (such, I mean, as are innocent) religion allows and approves of; and which without religion are indeed of no value, and can give us no true comfort and satisfaction. A distempered mind, like a distempered body, makes us incapable of every enjoyment. What pleasure can the best food give to a sick stomach? What joy can a person in pain receive from the most agreeable diversion? Much less can an uneasy mind (as every bad person's is) feel any pleasure or com-

fort from any, or all, of what are called the pleasures of life. But a good conscience gives a relish to every good thing besides:—it enlivens every amusement;—it causes a cheerful countenance as well as a merry heart.

I shall only make one observation at present upon what has been discoursed to you, which I wish to impress deeply on your minds. How good and kind is God, to make our duty and pleasure thus go hand in hand! so that by following the one we are sure to obtain the other. To make the same road the “way of pleasantness” in *this* life, and the way that leads to those “pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore” in the life to come.

ADMONITION III.

PROV. iii. 17.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness.

WHAT strange and false notions do some people entertain of religion!—as if it was a dull and melancholy thing; an enemy to all pleasure and cheerfulness: whereas it is in truth the great friend and promoter of both. Its “ways are ways of pleasantness,” says Solomon: and the Psalmist tells us, that “the voice of joy and gladness is in the dwellings of the righteous”—that “the statutes of the Lord rejoice the heart”—that God’s “law is his delight.” So again in the New Testament;—“His commandments are not grievous”—“The fruit of the Spirit is joy”—“Rejoice in
6 the

the Lord always," says St. Paul; "and again I say, Rejoice"—And in another place, "Rejoice evermore."

In my last discourse I shewed you the pleasures of religion in general. We will now consider the several branches of it in particular; as it is divided into our duty towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves; and we shall find, that its ways are, in every one of these, "ways of pleasantness;" and that a good life is, in every respect, a joyful and an happy one.

To begin with our duty towards God.—Now if we truly and sincerely believe in God; if we think of him as we ought; if we look up to him as our Maker, Preserver, and Redeemer; as the Author and Giver of all good things; as our heavenly Father, in whom "we live, move, and have our being;" as "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort:" what pleasure, what joy, must we feel in such thoughts and reflections!—Again: if we love him with all our hearts, and put our whole trust in him; if we express our love, and trust, and thankfulness to him, in prayer and praise; if we worship him, and give him thanks, both in private and public: what delight and comfort must we receive from thus discharging our duty towards him! How pleasantly, as well as profitably, is our time thus employed! On the Lord's day more particularly, what an honour and pleasure is it to enter his courts, and join our prayers and thanksgivings in the congregation of the faithful! "I was glad," says David, "when they
said

said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord:”—And surely every sincere Christian must say and think the same; and “call the Sabbath a delight,”—a day of true pleasure, as well as of religious exercise and improvement.—The last, but most material, part of our duty towards God is, “to serve him truly all the days of our life.” And what a pleasure must it be to serve so good and gracious a Master! to think that he will kindly accept our poor and imperfect services; and to be assured, that he will reward them with peace of mind in this world, and with joy and happiness unspeakable in that which is to come.

Next to the love of God comes the love of our neighbour; which includes our whole duty towards him: for so we are told by St. Paul, that “he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;” and that “it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The meaning is, that love, if hearty and sincere, will shew itself in our lives and actions, and put us upon doing every kind and good office in our power; upon discharging all the relative and social duties of life. It will make us good parents and children, good neighbours, and good friends. It will keep us continually well employed, and endeavouring to make one another happy. And is not this, think you, the way of pleasantness? a way that you would all wish to walk in? And let me tell you, for your comfort, that it is a way open to every body:—old and young, rich and poor, all may do their duty, all may be useful in life, all may do

do *some* good; and therefore all may be happy. Other pleasures are short and uncertain; hard to come at, and often attended with pain and disappointment; but the pleasure of doing good is sure and lasting; easy to be procured, and will never disappoint us. To instruct the ignorant, to assist the helpless, to comfort the afflicted, to encourage one another to love and to good works; these are duties we may all perform, these are pleasures we may all partake of.

Lastly, the duties that more immediately respect ourselves; such as, soberness, temperance, and chastity; diligence and industry. These are all productive of pleasure and comfort. To be sober, temperate, and chaste, is the only way to be healthy; and health gives pleasure. To be active and industrious, while it makes the body strong and vigorous, makes the mind cheerful and pleasant. The food we eat has a double relish, if earned by our own labour, and "the sleep of the labouring man is sweet." Even our play and diversions require industry in working to make us enjoy them; I mean when they are used as a relief from toil and business, and not made our chief business and employment. In short, there is no way of passing our lives comfortably, of enjoying health of body and peace of mind, but by "doing our duty in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us." You, my good children, have a great advantage in being thus early brought into the ways of religion and virtue; in being so soon taught your duty, and so frequently and earnestly exhorted to practise it. You are but just entering into life:
you

you have much time before you: make the most of it: and if you continue, as you have begun, in the right way, happy will it be for you both in this world and the next. The farther you advance in the knowledge and practice of your duty, the more pleasant and delightful you will find it. Remember you have a good and gracious God, whose laws are not grievous; and a merciful Saviour, whose "yoke is easy," and whose "burden is light:" who will safely guide all his faithful servants through this life; and will at last bring them to mansions of eternal joy and happiness in the life to come.—God grant we may all thus live and die in the Lord!

ADMONITION IV.

ECCLES. xii. 1.

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.

To "remember our Creator," signifies, to think of him; to meditate on his glorious nature and perfections; to consider him as always present with us, and as the constant witness of all our thoughts, words, and actions. Thus Moses says, in his exhortation to the Israelites, Deut. viii. 18. "Thou shalt *remember* the Lord thy God." And the pious Psalmist, to the same purpose, declares, "I have set the Lord always before me." And again: "I will *remember*

remember the works of the Lord." And in another psalm: "I have *remembered* thy name, O Lord; and HAVE KEPT THY LAW." Which last expression leads me to observe, that to remember God, in the text and elsewhere, signifies, not barely to think of him, but to remember him *practically*; that is, so to think of him as to serve and obey him: For "the mercy of the Lord" (as David says in the cited Psalm) "is upon them that fear him; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that REMEMBER HIS COMMANDMENTS TO DO THEM."

But to proceed with my text. You are told to remember God now; for the *present* is the only time you are sure of: "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." You are therefore to remember him "*now*, in the days of your youth:" for *now* you are most able to do it; *now*, in the time of your health and vigour, will your services be most acceptable to God; *now* will they be the surest evidence of your love and reverence towards him, and of your sincere and hearty desire to please him; *now*, too, they will be most useful and profitable to yourselves. By an early piety and obedience, you will make the discharge of your duty easy and familiar to you, and lay a sure foundation of future comfort and happiness. By setting out at first "in the way wherein you should go," you will be better able, and disposed, by God's grace, to continue in it all the days of your life; and as you advance in years, to increase in virtue and godliness. You will find the ways of wisdom, or religion, to be
"ways

“ ways of pleasantness,” as well as of peace. By a grateful remembrance of the Author and Giver of all good things, you will have a double enjoyment of the blessings of life : and by a firm trust in his mercy and goodness, you will bear the evils of it with patience and resignation ; “ knowing that all things work together for good to them that love and obey him.” — These are the great advantages of remembering and serving God in your youth ; “ while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them : ” — that is, before the approach of old age ; which is in itself evil and burdensome, but becomes far more grievous and terrible when loaded with the remembrance of past sins, and embittered with the dreadful prospect of death and judgment to come—when many pains and infirmities will naturally attend us, and when there can be no pleasure or comfort but in a good conscience and the recollection of a well-spent life. They who have been forgetful of God, and negligent of their duty, in their younger days (supposing they should live to be old, and have a due sense of their wickedness), will at best pass the decline of life in continual shame and sorrow. But should they be cut off in the midst of their evil courses, or live till they are hardened in sin, think only how dreadful must be the consequence. In the grave there is no room for repentance or amendment : they that die in their sins will infallibly rise to condemnation and eternal misery. And as to a death-bed repentance, besides the extreme folly and presumption

sumption of trusting to what may never happen, I see no good grounds in scripture for supposing it will be accepted, so as to be available to salvation. The gracious promises of the gospel are made to those that lead good and holy lives, not to dying penitents. It is "by patient continuance in well doing" (that is, by a constant and persevering course of good actions and good living), that we are taught to seek for, and assured that we shall obtain, "eternal life." Now the sooner we enter on such a course, the easier we shall find it, and the greater progress we shall make in it. On our first setting out in life, much, if not every thing, depends. Habits early contracted, whether good or bad, generally accompany us through life. Besides, we are told, that God will "reward every man according to his deeds." The sooner therefore we begin to work in his service, the greater will be our reward in heaven. Let us then lose no time; when, if well employed, it will turn to so good account. You, my good children, have been early trained up in the knowledge of God and of your duty. Be it your care and study to make the best use of these great privileges and benefits. Let the remembrance of your Creator be ever in your minds; let the fear and love of him be deep'y impressed in your hearts; and let it be your earnest and constant endeavour to serve and please him all the days of your life. "Worship the Lord with holy worship,"—pray to him daily for his grace and protection; praise him daily for his goodness and mercies. Remember that God is gracious, and will not forget

get your works done in obedience to his commands. "Be ye," therefore, "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

ADMONITION V.

I THESS. v. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

WE have many exhortations to this purpose in St. Paul's epistles—to "*continue in prayer*"—to "*continue instant in prayer*"—"praying *always* with all prayer and supplication in the spirit"—"in *every* thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to let our requests be made known unto God:"—and our blessed Saviour, we are told, "spake a parable" unto his disciples, "to this end, that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint." But we are not to suppose, by any of these expressions, that either Christ, or his apostle, meant that we should be *always* actually employed in prayer; nor even that the *greatest part* of our time should be devoted to it. For this would be inconsistent with the common business and duties of life; which our holy religion requires us to attend to carefully, and to discharge with diligence and industry. What is the true meaning and intent of these, and the like, precepts, and particularly of that in the text, I shall endeavour to shew you in the following discourse.

Now to "pray without ceasing," I apprehend,
implies

implies these three things. First, that we should be regular and constant in our times and seasons of praying: secondly, that we should be earnest, and in some degree importunate, in it: and, lastly, that we should be always in a fit habit and disposition for it.—Order and regularity are necessary upon all occasions. No business can be done well, no duty can be properly performed, without them. And so it is in regard to prayer. If we have not stated and regular times for praying, we shall neglect, or forget it; and at last perhaps entirely lay it aside. “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray,” says the pious psalmist. And of Daniel, it is recorded, that he prayed constantly “three times a day.” Twice a day, my good children, you should never fail offering up your prayers to God: in the morning, to thank him for preserving you through the night past, and to beg his blessing for the ensuing day; and in the evening to bless him for the mercies of the day, and to implore his protection for the following night. But on every Sunday, or Lord’s day, a much larger portion of your time should be employed in prayer and devotion. The Almighty has graciously allowed you six days out of seven to work, and provide for the good things of this life. The seventh day he has consecrated for his worship and service. Remember that it is your bounden duty, as well as your interest, to set it apart for that purpose. Never fail, I charge you, to go to church twice a day: and always bear in mind the *end* of your going thither; namely, to worship God, and to be instructed in your duty.

You

You should also spend some part of the day in reading good books at home, and thinking of what you have heard at church. A Sunday well employed will most likely ensure you an happy week.—Another particular implied in the text is, that we should be earnest, and in some sort importunate, in our prayers. Not that you should aim at any high flights or raptures of devotion (which is too often the case with hypocrites, and bad people) but the meaning is, that you should keep your minds *intent* on what you are about; that you should pray with your *hearts*, as well as with your lips. And if you are thus attentive and sincere, you will naturally feel some degree of warmth and earnestness in your addresses to the throne of grace. At least, you will not “faint,” as our Saviour expresses it; that is, you will not be cold and indifferent in your prayers. But, on the other hand, I must caution you against one fault, which is very common among children, and among some grown people; and that is, against speaking with too loud a voice when you say your prayers. For this answers no good purpose. It rather hinders, than promotes, your own devotion; and it disturbs that of others. Observe, I beg of you, the excellent direction given you in your common prayer book, to accompany the minister with “an *umble*,” or low “voice,” in such parts of the service as you are to repeat after him: and the same rule I would advise you to follow when you pray in private.

Lastly; tho’ we are not required to be always praying, yet we are required to be always in a

fit habit and disposition for it. By which I mean, that we should endeavour to preserve a devout frame and temper of mind, and to live under a continual sense of God's infinite power and goodness, and of our intire dependence on him, and obligations to him. Without such a disposition, our prayers are mere empty words; a mockery of God, instead of an acceptable service to him. Above all, we must be careful to lead an holy and virtuous life, remembering what the wise man tells us, that "the sacrifice of the *wicked* is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayer of the *upright* is his delight." And to the same purpose we read in the New Testament, that "God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, HIM HE HEARETH."

ADMONITION VI.

COLLOSS. iii. 15. --latter part.

And be ye thankful.

THERE is no surer sign of a good and well-disposed heart than thankfulness, or gratitude. On the other hand, nothing shews a base and depraved one more than the want of thankfulness, or ingratitude. It was a common saying among the Romans, and a very true one, "Call a man ungrateful, and you call him every thing that is bad." And one of the wisest writers among them observes, that "there is no bad quality but what dwells in the breast of the ungrateful." In scripture we find ingratitude
make

make a part of the very worst of characters. Thus St. Paul, speaking of the ancient heathen world, says, that "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, *neither were thankful.*" And in another epistle, foretelling the exceeding great wickedness of "the last days," among other instances of it, he says, that "men shall be *unthankful.*"

As Almighty God is the author and giver of all good things, of all that we enjoy here, or hope for hereafter; so he is, or ought to be, the first object of our gratitude. "Unto THEE, O God, do we give thanks: yea, unto THEE do we give thanks." To him it is, that we are commanded in the text to "be thankful:" and to him we are directed, throughout the bible, to offer up our tribute of praise and thanksgiving. "Be ye thankful," is the voice of nature, and the voice of God. The book of Psalms is one continued lesson, as well as example, of this duty. The pious effusions of a grateful heart shine there in the most sublime and animated language. From thence we may learn that thanksgiving is a most material and essential part of devotion; and that, in all our addresses to the throne of grace, we should add praise to prayer. So we read of Daniel, a bright pattern of piety and holiness, that "he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and *gave thanks* before his God, as he did aforetime;" that is, as it had been his constant practice. So again, we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the first Christians not only "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in prayers;"

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but that they were "daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, *praising God*." If we look into the epistles of St. Paul, we shall find him, like David, full of gratitude and thanksgiving; and continually exhorting others to follow his example. Thus he charges the Ephesians to be "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." And to the Theffalonians he says, "In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And again to the Hebrews, "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually." For the due performance of this duty, I can give no instructions so good as what you may meet with in your common-prayer book. Look into that admirable form, called "the general thanksgiving," and there you will find for what, and in what manner, you are to thank "the father of all mercies." You are to thank him, most humbly and heartily, for all his goodness and loving kindness, both to you and to all men; for your "creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life," all which proceed from his bounty and goodness. But "above all" you are to thank him for his amazing and "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ," the foundation of our pardon and salvation; "for the means of grace" here, and "for the hope of glory" hereafter, procured us by his merits and mediation. And, since we can discharge no part of our duty, nor consequently pay our debt of

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gratitude

gratitude to God, as we ought, without the assistance of his Holy Spirit; you must therefore beseech him to give you "such a due sense of all his mercies, that your hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that you may shew forth his praise, not only with your lips, but in your lives." Hence you are to learn, that without a sincere and thankful heart, and a good and holy life, all our praises and thanksgivings are of no value in the sight of God; they are mere empty words; nay worse, they are vile hypocrisy. And because it is only a steady, constant, uniform, and lasting obedience, that can shew the sincerity of our thankfulness, or make our praises acceptable unto God; you must pray that, by the help of his grace, you may "give up yourselves" *intirely* "to his service, and walk before him in holiness and righteousness *all your days*." If therefore you would fulfil the precept in the text, let a grateful sense of God's love and kindness dwell in your hearts continually. Let your lips speak the language of your hearts. And, above all, let your lives be answerable to both. Let them be one continued sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to him, in whom you "live, move, and have your being."

You must also remember to be thankful to man, as well as to God; first to your parents, whose love and care of you, you should endeavour to repay, as well as you can, by every act of dutiful attention; helping and supporting those in their old age, who have nursed and taken care of you in your infancy and youth.

You should be thankful likewise to your friends and benefactors; particularly to those who have watched over you in your tender years, and instructed you in the most useful of all knowledge, that of the holy scriptures; "which alone can make you wise unto salvation, thro' faith in Christ Jesus" All the return we desire is, that you will make a good use of our instructions. We have trained you up "in the way wherein you should go." Be it your care, by the grace of God, "never to depart from it."

ADMONITION VII.

LUKE XI. 2.

When ye pray, say, Our Father, which art in Heaven.

MY design from these words, is not to explain to you the Lord's prayer; that is so well done already in the catechism, and the book of sections, that I think it needless to add any thing upon the subject. But what I mean is, to shew you *what it is* to pray, and *how* to pray as you ought: and this with a particular view to the Lord's prayer, as being the best of all prayers, and what we are taught constantly to use, whenever we address God, either in private or public. You may think perhaps that to *pray*, and to *say your prayers*, is one and the same thing; and that if you say them every morning and evening at home, and on Sundays when you go to church, you have done all that is required of you. But this, my dear children, is a great mistake; for to *pray*, is an act of the mind or heart,

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and may be done without opening our lips. On the other hand, barely to *say* one's prayers, is the work of the mouth; and if it does not come from the heart, is of no sort of use whatever, nor can it properly be called *praying*. Instead of doing our duty to God in this respect, it is an affront and insult offered him, if we pray with our lips, and not with our hearts. They should indeed both go together; and when we lift up our minds to heaven, it is natural, and it is right, that we should express our thoughts and desires in suitable words. For so our Saviour directs us – "WHEN YE PRAY, SAY," and then follows that excellent form of words, which he has graciously taught us, wherein to offer up our devotions properly and acceptably, at all times and on all occasions. But how should this prayer be said? Surely with more than ordinary care and deliberation. Whereas the way in which it is commonly repeated, is, I am sorry to observe, more hasty, and careless, and slovenly, than that of saying any other prayer whatever; without so much as the *appearance* of devotion, or even of attention. It is more like the chattering of parrots, than like a religious act of a rational creature. I do not speak of you children in particular; but of the too general way of saying the Lord's prayer by people of every age, both in church and out. It is hurried over shamefully, as if it were a thing of course, a matter of mere form, not worth attending to. And I am sure it never *can* be attended to in that manner of saying it. It certainly is not *praying*: it is rather a false show, or an abuse of prayer, a moving of the lips, without any motion of the heart.

heart. It is no better than a mockery of God, to whom the prayer is addressed; and an insult on our Saviour, who taught us the use of it. And can you expect to be heard, or that your petitions will be granted, when offered up in so negligent and thoughtless a way? "Be not deceived: God is not to be mocked." He has a right to our utmost reverence and respect: to the service of our hearts and souls; to our warmest love and adoration. He will not be put off with *lip-service*, or with vain pretences of praying. Let me only ask you one question. Supposing you had a favour to beg of any of *us*; would you speak to us in that hasty, careless way, in which you say the Lord's prayer? Would not you rather speak slowly, handsomely, and respectfully? You *ought* so to do, and you certainly *would* do so, if you expected to have your requests granted. And would you treat God Almighty with less respect than you do one of your fellow creatures? Consider, I intreat you, when you say the Lord's prayer, or any other, who it is you are speaking to. It is to your great Creator, the Lord of heaven and earth, in whom you "live, move, and have your being:" on whom you intirely depend for life, and support, and every thing;—to the God who, "heareth prayer:" who hears, and regards the sincere and devout petitions of his faithful servants; but no other. Consider also the *subject* of your prayers. It is to pray to him for all you want; to thank him for all you have; to beg his blessing on you both in this life, and in that which is to come. For his "is the kingdom, and the power, and

the glory, for ever and ever." And if you thus seriously consider, *who* you are praying to, and *what* you are praying for, you cannot surely be at a loss, *how* to pray. You must see the propriety, and absolute necessity, of praying with close attention and humble reverence and devotion; and of saying your prayers slowly, clearly, and deliberately. Never mind what others do; never follow bad examples. They will be no excuse to you. By your *own* act, by your *own* praying, you will stand, or fall, in the sight of God. It is not the length of a prayer, but the devotion and sincerity of heart, with which it is put up, that he regards. Better say five words with your understanding and attention, than ten thousand without. Even a *silent* prayer from the *heart* is better than the longest or finest composition, that proceeds only from the *mouth*. The Lord's prayer itself is in fact no prayer to him who uses it improperly or indecently.

To conclude. What St. John says of the great duty of *love*, is equally applicable to that of *prayer*. "My little children, let us not *pray* in word, neither in tongue," *only*: "but in deed, and in truth." And that we may so pray, let us remember at all times, and in all places, that we are addressing ourselves to God, who is every where present; on earth, as well as in heaven; and who has declared, that "them that honour him, he will honour; and that they that despise him, shall be lightly esteemed." Let us therefore "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: let us worship the Lord with holy worship."

ADMONITION VIII.

EXODUS XX. 8.

Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.

THE appointment of the sabbath is as old as the creation ; or rather, it immediately followed it. For so we read, in the 2d chapter of Genesis ; that as soon as “ the heavens and the earth were finished,” God “ blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.” The word, “*sabbath*,” you are to observe, signifies *rest*. And to “*sanctify*,” or “*hallow*,” is to make *holy*; or to devote any thing to an holy use or purpose. So that the sabbath, you see, is to be observed both as a day of rest, and of worship. The very name implies the one; and the command, to keep it holy, expressly requires the other.—That we may observe it as we ought, let us inquire what is to be *done*, and what is to be left *undone*, on that sacred day.

In general, it is to be devoted to the service of Almighty God ; to be employed in his worship, both in public and private. Our private devotions indeed should never be omitted on any day ; our public ones are required only on Sunday. We should then go to church regularly twice a day ; to pray to God, to praise and thank him for all his goodness ; to hear his holy word ; and to be instructed in our duty. Besides this, we should spend some part of the day in serious thought and meditation ; in reading the bible, and other religious books. We should consider with ourselves how we have employed

the week past; and if we recollect any faults we have committed, repent, and resolve to avoid the like in future. We should also take every opportunity of instructing the ignorant, and those that are younger than ourselves, in the principles and duties of religion. All offices of kindness and charity, such as visiting the sick, relieving the needy, and comforting the afflicted, are particularly seasonable on the Lord's day. By performing those duties we may be said, in a *double* sense, to keep it holy. But we must abstain from all labour and working, (except works of necessity and charity) in order to keep it as a day of rest: and from all play and diversions, in order to keep it as a day of holiness. From sin and wickedness of all sorts we are indeed to refrain *every* day alike. Yet surely on this sacred day sin may be said to be "exceeding" or *doubly* "sinful;" as it is a prostitution of the sabbath, as well as an offence against the other laws of God. Drunkenness, for instance, is at *all* times a vice most shameful and abominable. On a *Sunday* it has the guilt of profaneness added to it. A Sunday spent idly, is generally spent wickedly. If not kept *holy*, it is commonly made more *unholy* than any other day of the week. And the reason is plain. Idleness naturally leads to vice and folly. He that is not well employed, will be ill employed. When work is laid aside, and religious exercises neglected, time will not barely be lost, but abused: and the sin of *omission* will be followed by sins of *commission*. Many that have ended their lives at the gallows have declared, that they began their wicked courses by

by spending the Lord's day idly and profanely. What was intended for their good, has become by their abuse of it, an occasion of their falling into sin and destruction.

How good and gracious is God in all his dispensations to man? His laws and commandments are not only "holy and just," but wisely and mercifully designed for our benefit and happiness. This, in particular, of observing the sabbath, is evidently calculated for the ease and relief both of man and beast; as well as for our improvement in religious knowledge and practice. It is, if rightly understood, a delightful, as well as a profitable institution. If our minds are well disposed, we shall take pleasure in every return of the Lord's day: we shall "enter into his courts with praise, and serve him with joy and gladness." We shall consider it as the beginning of a good week to us; as insuring God's blessing upon our labours and undertakings for the other six days. And we shall also look upon it (as we are directed to do in St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews) as a pledge or earnest of our *future* "rest" in heaven; of that *eternal* sabbath, which "remaineth to the people of God."

"Remember" therefore "the sabbath-day, to keep it holy." When you have left this school, recollect often how you passed it during your attendance here, and let it be an example for you to follow ever after. Never fail going to church: not as a matter of custom, or form, or decency; but as it is your bounden duty, and your highest interest so to do. Go

thither, not to look about you, or to talk with your neighbours; but to worship God. Look only at your books, converse only with your Maker. Be clean and decent in your dress; but think no farther about it. A pure heart, an humble and devout spirit, is the only ornament that God requires, and delights in.—Many of you, I observe it with pleasure, are fond of psalm-singing, and sing well. By all means let me encourage you in it. It is a delightful, it is an heavenly, entertainment; as well as a material part of public worship. It is good at *all* times: on *Sundays* it is peculiarly so. Idle tattling and gossiping is always bad: on *Sundays* in particular. But in an hour or two's friendly conversation, after the duty of the day is over, there is no harm.—I shall conclude with my hearty prayers to God (in which I hope you will all join me) that he will dispose you so to pass this and every day of your lives, that you may “apply your hearts unto wisdom.”

ADMONITION IX.

EXODUS xx. 13.

Thou shalt not kill.

OR, as we read in the prayer-book, “Thou shalt do no murder.” A crime so heinous, so horrid; so truly diabolical, that nature shudders at the very thought of it. But besides the actual commission of murder, there are many ways by which you may be guilty, though in a lesser degree, of the sin here forbidden. Without

out taking away a man's life, you may injure him in his character; you may hurt his health; you may destroy his peace of mind; you may, by your ill treatment of him, shorten his days, or make them uncomfortable. And every offence of this kind is in fact a breach of the sixth commandment.

"Whosoever hateth his brother," says St. John, "is a murderer." As "*love* is the *fulfilling* of the law," *hatred*, of course, must be the *transgressing* of it; and particularly of this part of the law which forbids murder. All sin takes its rise from the heart: "Out of the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed **MURDERS.**" So that if you bear malice or hatred in your heart, you are in the scripture sense guilty of murder. And it is plainly with a view to this commandment I am speaking of, that the catechism tells you, in the account of your duty towards your neighbour, that you must "bear no malice nor hatred in your heart." But indeed hatred seldom stops there; it generally proceeds to bad words and bad actions, which are great aggravations of the guilt of a bad heart. Accordingly, the catechism tells you, "to hurt nobody by word or deed." But you may think, perhaps, that mere words can hurt nobody; and that if you refrain from injurious actions, you may give a vent to your passion in *saying* what you please. Look into the 5th chapter of St. Matthew, and you will find a very different account of the matter. "Ye have heard," says our Saviour, "that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in dan-

ger of the judgment:" that is, the Jews considered only the strict letter of the law, and taught that actual murder would expose a man to punishment. "But I say unto you," says Christ, "that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire:" A plain proof, that by words, as well as actions, we may break the commandment, and be punished for it everlastingly. God searcheth our hearts; and "there is not a word in our tongues, but thou, O Lord, knowest it altogether," and wilt most assuredly call us to account for it at the day of judgment.

There is one way in which the sixth commandment is too often broken, which you may little think of, but which deserves your most serious consideration; I mean, by the bad behaviour of undutiful children towards their parents. This is sometimes, in the strict and literal sense, committing murder. How many, alas! have by this means had their lives shortened, as well as made miserable. To take away the life of those who, under God, gave us life, is surely a sin of the deepest dye; the most horrid species of murder. And believe me, every wicked and undutiful child is in some degree guilty of it. To break a parent's heart, is not only killing, but torturing; and in any way to give sorrow or uneasiness to those, whom it should be our study to make easy and happy, is a double offence against God, as being a breach both of the fifth and sixth commandment.

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To conclude: Every wicked person, of whatever age or station he may be, is in some sort a murderer; as he disturbs the peace of society, and leads others into sin. In this respect he is truly a follower of the devil, who is said to have been "a murderer from the beginning;" inasmuch as he brought sin and death into the world, and still continues to destroy the souls of men by his temptations.—But "be ye followers of God, as dear children:" keeping his commandments, and walking in love; after the example of your blessed Master, who came into the world, "not to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

ADMONITION X.

EXODUS XX. 15.

Thou shalt not steal.

BESIDES the grosser acts of theft or robbery, there are many lesser sorts of the same sin forbidden by this commandment: such as, fraud, or cheating, of every kind; neglecting to pay debts; taking advantage of other men's necessities; imposing on their ignorance in matters of trade, or bargains; unfaithfulness to one's trust; and, in short, whatever is contrary to strict honesty and justice, and to that excellent rule of doing as one would be done by. And here it is necessary to caution young people in particular against the first beginnings of this sin: against doing wrong in smaller matters; against pilfering, or cheating, in things of
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little value; lest (as is generally the case) they go on from bad to worse, and become at last hardened in wickedness. For in this, as in all other sins, few people begin with the highest crimes, and few stop at the lowest. One naturally leads to another, and so draws them on by degrees to death and destruction. Bad habits are seldom, if ever, got rid of; and none perhaps grows upon a man more than that of thieving, or dishonesty. He soon loses his character; nobody will trust or employ him; he knows not how to get a livelihood by fair means, and so has recourse to the worst; and most likely ends a miserable life in prison, or at the gallows. Or should he escape punishment in this world, (which is very seldom the case), he is sure to meet with it, in everlasting misery, in the world to come: for we are expressly told, that "thieves shall not inherit the kingdom of God;" and that "the Lord is the avenger of all such as go beyond and defraud their brother *in any matter.*" Observe these last words; which shew that God will severely punish not only the notorious thief and robber, but whosoever is guilty of any fraud, or over-reaching, even in lesser instances; "in any," and every, "matter," without exception. "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him." Levit. xix. 11—13. Remember also what our blessed Saviour says: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." Luke xvi. 10. Accustom yourselves

yourselves therefore to be strictly honest and just, and faithful to your trust, in the most trifling concerns, and things of the smallest consequence, that you may learn to be so in matters of greater importance: and be careful to avoid every act of thieving, or cheating, in the least instances, lest you get into bad habits, and commit greater crimes. Be assured, that for every transgression of your duty you must be accountable to God. If you steal or cheat never so secretly, you cannot escape his notice and his punishment. He will not admit of any excuses for fraud or dishonesty. You must not think to plead poverty, or hunger, or distress of any kind. Work for your livelihood, and honest industry will never fail to procure it. To eat the bread of idleness is bad, even when no dishonest means are used to obtain it; but when idleness and thieving go together (as it commonly happens) the sin is doubled, and great indeed is the guilt of the sinner. But you may think perhaps, that if you take from another a small pittance of what he has in great abundance, you do him no injury, and therefore there is no harm in it. Be not deceived: the sin is the same in *you*, though the consequence of it may not be so bad to *him*. Servants, in particular, are apt to take very improper liberties with what belongs to their masters or mistresses, under a false notion that they have a right to partake of it; or (what is still worse) give away a portion of it to others, because they would be kind and generous. But this again is a *double* crime: it is adding breach of trust to dishonesty. To give away what is
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not your own to dispose of, is not charity, but cheating, or rather downright injustice.

Borrowing, and not paying, is another way of breaking the commandment, too commonly practised by persons of every age and condition; but not the less sinful for being common. In this case, the borrower receives no lasting benefit; and the lender is hurt, and often ruined, by it. It is best, therefore, not to borrow at all. You will thereby keep clear of one sort of dishonesty, and prevent much mischief and distress both to yourself and others.

I cannot conclude this subject better, than by advising and exhorting you most earnestly, in the words of the catechism, "not to covet, nor desire, other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get your own living; and to do your duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call you." Honesty is the best policy: and "HE THAT WALKETH UPRIGHTLY WALKETH SURELY."

ADMONITION XI.

MATTHEW vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

THIS declaration of our blessed Lord to his disciples, is one of those many passages of scripture, which shew the necessity of obedience

obedience to the will of God, in order to our salvation, or to our being admitted into the kingdom of heaven. They are so plain, that one would think it impossible to mistake their meaning; or unnecessary to do any thing more than barely to repeat them. For as the gospel was to be "preached to the *poor*," so the most important parts of it are level to the lowest capacity. He that *runneth* may read, and he that readeth may *understand*, all that is required of him to make him holy, and to make him happy. Yet, I know not how it happens, whether from carelessness or perverseness, or both; the plainest and most interesting truths are sometimes overlooked and disregarded, and at other times mistaken, or perverted. Even the doctrine in the text, though so often held forth, and so earnestly inculcated, in the New Testament, has been strangely passed over by some pretended preachers of the gospel; and a shorter way to heaven has been pointed out by false guides, quite different from that shown us by Christ and his apostles. But, my "little children" (I speak to you in the words of scripture) "let no man deceive you: he that *doeth* righteousness, *is* righteous." And "without holiness," or righteousness, "no man shall see the Lord." "If thou wilt enter into life," says our Saviour, "KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS." And again: "Blessed are they that hear the word of God: and KEEP it." In like manner, says St. Paul: "God will render to every man ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: glory, honour, and peace" (that is, *eternal* glory and happiness) "to every man that WORKETH GOOD." And in
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another epistle, "WORK OUT your own salvation." So also St. James: "Be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only," for "faith without works is dead." And St. John, in the Revelation: "Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may have right to the Tree of Life."—These texts (to which many more might be added) are so exceedingly plain and clear, that you cannot fail, I think, to understand them. And the matter of them is so important, that they deserve your utmost attention and constant remembrance. Consider, I beseech you, the end and design of Christ's coming into the world. It was, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar," or holy, "people, zealous of good works;" that, being fully instructed by him in the will of God, we "might serve him, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life." "This is a faithful saying," says St. Paul, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Very true. But *how* did he save them? Not only by offering himself a sacrifice for sins past, but also by reforming, and leading them to obedience for the future; "teaching them, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." "*This*," therefore (as the same apostle declares) is *likewise* "a faithful saying, that they which have *believed* in God might be careful to MAINTAIN GOOD WORKS; that is, to live suitably to their belief and profession. Religion is an *active* service. It is not enough, that it be rooted in the heart,
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and shew itself in outward professions of faith and godliness: it must also bring forth the *fruit* of good works. These are the only sure evidences of it; and to these only are its rewards and promises annexed. To call Christ our Lord and Master, and not obey his commands, is no better than a mockery of him; an affront and insult to him. *Practical* infidels (such, I mean, as acknowledge Christ with their *mouths*, but in their *works* deny him) are the worst of all infidels. We cannot plead ignorance of our duty; for he has fully and clearly revealed it to us. We cannot plead inability to perform it; for he has graciously promised the assistance of his Holy Spirit to all that ask for it. Tho' weak of ourselves, we can "do all things," necessary to our salvation, "thro' Christ that strengtheneth us." If therefore we fail in our duty, we are wholly without excuse. In vain shall we cry, Lord, Lord, either here or hereafter, if we do not approve ourselves his faithful and obedient servants. In vain shall we sue for mercy, when he comes to judgment: when his answer will be, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

By what has been said of the necessity of doing the will of God, in order to obtain the rewards of heaven, you are not to suppose that our good actions have any *merit* in them, or that we properly *deserve* those rewards.—No.—"Eternal life is the *gift*," the free undeserved gift "of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is his merits, and all-perfect obedience, that must recommend our imperfect services to God.

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There is therefore no room "for boasting" on *our* part.—Far otherwise.—But if with faith and humility, we do the best we can to serve and please God, we may be sure that our services, however imperfect, will be accepted; and that, however undeserving, we shall not "lose our reward."

ADMONITION XII.

GALATIANS vi. 7—former part.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked.

ALAS! how liable are we to be deceived by others; and, what is still worse, how apt are we to deceive ourselves! This perhaps may seem strange; but it is too true, and too easily accounted for. Besides deceivers and enemies *without*; evil men and evil spirits, that are ever watching to seduce us; we have an enemy no less dangerous lurking *within*, that is continually ready to betray us. For "THE HEART," says the prophet, "IS DECEITFUL ABOVE ALL THINGS, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Who can find out its dark windings and turnings; its secret arts and impositions; its deceitful workings; whereby we are continually in danger of being misled from our duty, and drawn into sin? Against every kind of deceit, whereby our salvation is endangered, we have frequent cautions and admonitions in the holy scriptures, and particularly in the epistles of St. Paul. In one place we read: "Let no man deceive you with vain words."

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In another ; “ Let no man deceive *himself*.” In the text ; “ Be not deceived ”—which may be understood as a warning against both kinds of deceit ; from others as well as from ourselves. The very same words are used by St. James, tho’ differently translated ; where he says ; “ Do not *err*, my beloved brethren.” For error will be the consequence of deceit in either case ; whether it proceed from within or without. After this general admonition, “ Be not deceived ; ” it follows : “ God is not mocked.” As if the Apostle had said ; “ Beware of being deceived, or of deceiving yourselves. For tho’ you may impose upon yourselves, or upon one another, you cannot deceive or impose upon God.” The very notion, the expression, of mocking God, carries with it something shocking and profane. And yet every wilful sin is, in some sort, an attempt to mock God ; and every wilful sinner is, in some sense, guilty of this horrid blasphemy. The language of his heart (if not of his mouth) is thus described by the Psalmist ; “ How doth God know ? is there knowledge in the Most High ? ” And again ; “ God hath forgotten : he hideth his face, he will never see it.” Such is the folly and deceitfulness, of sin ; blinding the understanding, at the same time that it corrupts the heart. To such false reasonings, such absurd suppositions, is the sinner driven. Various are the arts and delusions, by which men impose upon themselves, and upon one another. But the most general and common way is, by an imagination, that they may be saved, or go to heaven, without
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leading a good and holy life—than which nothing can be more directly contrary to the plain and constant doctrine of scripture, and particularly of the New Testament. Our Saviour says expressly ; that “ he only who doeth the will of God, shall enter into his heavenly kingdom ”—that, if we will enter into life, we *must* “ keep the commandments.” The same important truth is continually held forth to us by his Apostles. “ Whatsoever a man soweth,” says St. Paul, “ that shall he also reap ”—“ Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”—It is as impossible to get to heaven without a life of good works, as it is to have a good crop of corn without sowing good seed ; or to “ gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.”—Let no one therefore deceive you with vain pretences, and false hopes of salvation, contrary to the express word of God.—Read your Bible ; believe it ; act according to it ; and you cannot think or act amiss. Does a Gospel-preacher (as he falsely calls himself) tell you that faith alone will save you ? that if you trust to the merits of Christ, that will be sufficient ?—answer him, in the words of Scripture, that “ faith without works is dead ; ” and that “ by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”—Tell him, that you believe, and trust, in the merits of your Saviour as firmly and sincerely as he can do ; but that, without an holy and good life on *your* part, those merits will be of no avail to you : for that Christ “ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar” (or holy) “ people, zealous of good works.”

Again :

Again: Take great care that you be not deceived by idle and worthless companions, who will use all their arts and frauds to corrupt both your principles and manners. — Do not converse with such — turn away from them; — fly from them as you would from a plague, or other contagious distemper. — They are “fools,” in Solomon’s judgment, that “make a mock at sin:” and they are *worse* than fools, that would argue, or laugh, you out of your religion and virtue.

Lastly: Beware of your own hearts; — never flatter yourselves that you are in the way of salvation, while you are in the way of sin or wickedness, and let me advise you often and fervently to pray in the words of David; “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts — and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting.”

ADMONITION XIII.

PHILIPPIANS i. 27.

Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.

THE word “conversation,” here, as well as in other parts of the Bible, does not signify our talk or discourse; but takes in the *whole* of our conduct and behaviour in life: so that we are to understand the precept in the text as a general injunction to live as becomes Christians; to conform ourselves in all things to the excellent rules and directions laid down in the gospel of Christ; to be “holy, (as St. Peter expresses it) “in all manner of conversation.”

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The necessity of this, in order to our salvation, is so very plain and evident, both from reason and scripture, and has been so fully shewn to you in a former discourse, that I shall not repeat what I said upon that subject: but shall rather point out to you some particulars, in which we should be more than ordinarily careful to follow the direction in the text; and so approve ourselves *real* Christians, and sincere disciples of him whose name we bear, and by whom we hope to be saved.

Now "the wisdom that is from above," or the religion which Christ came down from heaven to teach us, "is first pure:" that is, it requires great purity of heart as well as of manners—what the Psalmist calls "a clean heart," and "clean hands"—strict chastity in all our thoughts, words, and actions. "For this ye know," says the apostle (and I earnestly beseech you always to bear it in remembrance), "that no unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."

Again: it is "peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated." The gospel, like its divine author, breathes the spirit of love, peace, and benevolence, in every part of it. "By this," says our Saviour, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." You see, he makes it the distinguishing mark, or badge, of our profession. And, as a peaceable disposition and behaviour is the natural fruit of love, so we are commanded to "have peace one with another;—to "live in peace," or "peaceably with all men;"—to "seek peace,
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hypocrisy." The true Christian is open, sincere, honest; free from every narrow selfish view, from all undue prejudice and partiality. His love is "without dissimulation." His words flow from his heart; and his actions correspond with his words.

I have here given you a short sketch of Christian virtue, or of such a conversation as "becomes the gospel of Christ." A more particular account of its relative, or social, duties, you will find admirably drawn up in your Catechism, in that article which describes your duty towards your neighbour. Let me beg of you often to look at it, and to consider it with attention: a better lesson you cannot have, nor can you follow a better guide. Think of it every day of your lives; and practise it conscientiously. Indeed the *whole* Catechism is so excellent, that I would wish you to make it your constant companion through life. Do not forget or despise it, as if it were fit only for the use of *children*: it is fit for *every* age; as it contains the sum and substance of the Christian religion.

There is one quality, or disposition, which both our Saviour and his apostles, in a very particular manner, recommend, and require as absolutely necessary to a disciple of Christ; which is, heavenly-mindedness:—to "set our affections on things above;" to make heaven the principal end of our thoughts and pursuits. For, as St. Paul expresses it, "our conversation is in heaven"—*there* lies our true interest—*that* is the country to which we belong—*there* is our treasure—

treasure—*there*, then, should our “ hearts be also.” If they are so, if we are sincere and in earnest in our religion, we shall not fail to fulfil the precept in the text; we shall consider ourselves as strangers, or travellers, upon earth; and our “ conversation” *here* will be “ such as becometh the gospel of Christ.”

ADMONITION XIV.

ROMANS xii. 11—former part.

Not slothful in Business.

NEVER BE IDLE—sloth, or idleness, is the ruin and destruction both of body and soul. It is not only a great evil in itself, but it is productive also of many other evils. It leads to sickness, poverty, sensuality, dishonesty, and loss of character. It is unnatural: for we are by nature formed for action, and fond of it. It is contrary to our duty and obligation as men, or social creatures; who were made to help, and do good to, one another. It is contrary to the express will and command of God; who has taught and directed us, in his holy word, to be diligent and industrious, active and laborious, in our several callings; and to be continually employed in serving and assisting our brethren. The misery and sinfulness of a slothful and idle life, and the blessings of an industrious one, are set before us in very strong terms, in many passages of holy scripture. “ Slothfulness,” says the wise man, “ casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.” “ The soul

of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." "The hand of the diligent maketh rich," but "the desire of the slothful killeth him." "In all labour there is profit," not only in this life, but our "works," we are assured, will "follow" us into that which is to come; there to meet with their full reward: where, on the other hand, "the unprofitable servant;" he who has wasted his time here in idleness, and made no use or improvement of the talents committed to his trust; shall be "cast into outer darkness," and punished with eternal misery.—In the text, as well as in many other parts of his Epistles, St. Paul warns us against the sin of idleness, and exhorts us to the opposite virtue of industry. For when he forbids us to be slothful, he plainly bids us be diligent; as he commands his disciples, in another place, to "work with their own hands," and to "labour, working the thing which is good:" and again, "if any will not work," says he, "neither should he eat." The words, "Not slothful in business," imply these two things: first, that we have all some business to do; some work, some calling, that we ought to be employed in; and, secondly, that we should be active and industrious in following it.—Our all wise and good Creator has designed and fitted us for action and labour, both of body and mind. He has made it necessary to our own well-being, as individuals; and likewise to the good of society, as we are social creatures, or "members one of another." Various and different are the tasks allotted us; as are the abilities

ties and opportunities we are furnished with of performing them. High and low, rich and poor, old and young, learned and unlearned, we have all some work assigned us, which it is our duty to do, both for ourselves, and for one another. Some are to work with their hands, some with their head, and some with both. Our several situations in life plainly point out to us, what it is our duty to be employed in. Our principal concern is, to be diligent in that employment. "Whatsoever thy hand," or thy head, "findeth to do, do it with thy might." Exert all your strength, use all your diligence, in the execution of it. Lose no time, spare no pains, in learning, and in doing, your duty.—You, my good children, are more particularly obliged to be industrious in your several occupations—you have had great advantages in being taught your duty; you are therefore doubly bound to practise it. While *we* are working with our *heads* for *your* good, *you* are without excuse if you do not work diligently with your *hands* for *your own*—while *our* time is employed in instructing you, it is *your* business and duty to profit by our instructions. You are young, and healthy, and able to work: and your station in life is such as requires you so to do for your bread and support. It is your duty also to work for your parents, and occasionally for your other friends and benefactors. And believe me, it is as much your interest and your happiness, as it is your duty, to be always well employed. It will give you health of body, and peace of mind. It will make your days cheerful and comfortable, and

your sleep of nights sweet and refreshing. It will make you beloved and esteemed by all that know you. It will enable you to provide, not only for yourselves, but for your families likewise, when you have any. It will make you useful members of society; good neighbours, and valuable friends.—By your *example*, at least, you may all do good; and in some sort fulfil the precept of our blessed Saviour, to “let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

And here let me give you one caution: that while you are discharging your duty towards *men*, you do not forget your duty towards God. Indeed by doing the one, you are in a great measure discharging the other. But what I mean is, that you never let the duties of your several stations or employments in life, so far take up your time and thoughts, as to hinder you from praying to God, and paying him the worship that is due to him, both in private and public. For remember, that no labour or business can prosper without *his* blessing attending it; and that the same commandment which permits, and enjoins, our working for *six* days, requires us to “keep holy” the seventh; that, as we should be employed chiefly on the other days in providing for our *bodily* and *temporal* wants, so on the sabbath, or Lord’s day, we should labour for our *spiritual* sustenance; for that “meat which endureth unto everlasting life.”

ADMONI-

ADMONITION XV.

EPHESIANS vi. 7 and 8.

With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

WE are here, as well as in other parts of the epistles, instructed in the duty of servants to their masters and mistresses. For the scripture, being a rule of life and manners, as well as of faith, gives us directions, not only for our duty in general, but also for the discharge of every branch of it in particular; according to our different callings and situations. Now, as many of you may probably go to service in some part of your life, some rules for your good behaviour therein may be of use and benefit to you; and such I mean at present to lay before you.

In the text you may observe, first, a general direction given you, *how* to do your duty as servants properly and conscientiously: and secondly, a *reward* held forth to you as an encouragement for so doing—Let us consider each distinctly—The rule is this—"With good-will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." "With good-will," signifies, with a willing and ready mind; with an affectionate and obliging disposition; with a desire to please "not by constraint, but willingly," and cheerfully.—And it is to be done, "as to the Lord, and not to men,"—that is, from a *religious* principle,

ciple, or a sense of duty towards God. As the apostle elsewhere expresses it; "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God"—"and whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."—The meaning is, not that we are to *overlook* our duty and obligations to men; but that we are to *look farther*, to the fountain and origin of all duty, which is the will and command of God: and that, while we serve our masters *on earth*, we should consider ourselves as doing service to CHRIST, who is our master *in heaven*. —"Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers,"—that is, not barely endeavouring to please, and gain the good-will of, our masters, by doing what we think they will like, when their eyes are *upon* us: but serving them truly and faithfully at *all* times, when they are *absent*, as well as *present*—"as the servants of Christ," who always sees what we are doing—"in singleness of heart"—that is sincerely and conscientiously—"fearing God," and "doing his will from the heart;"—always remembering, that he searcheth our hearts, and knoweth our inward thoughts, and most secret designs, as well as our outward actions; and that he will reward, or punish, us, according as they are good, or bad, in his sight. Whatsoever therefore we do, in the service of our masters and mistresses, we are to do it "heartily," and "with a good-will," as unto God, and unto Christ—to whom we are accountable for our behaviour, in this, as well as in every other part of our duty towards man. The same direction that David gave his son Solomon

Iomon for the service of God, will hold good for
 the service of our earthly masters—"Serve
 him," says he, "with a perfect heart, and with
 a willing mind."—The truth is, that without a
 willing disposition, and a sincere desire of doing
 our duty, nothing can be done as it ought. A
 good-will is the great spring of action. A ready
 and cheerful mind is the great support of it. It
 gives vigour to our faculties, quickens our dili-
 gence, and enables us to overcome many diffi-
 culties. It makes the discharge of our duty both
 easy and pleasant to us. In service, as well as
 in every other situation of life, the best rule we
 can go by is what St. Paul lays down for the
 giving of alms; to act "not grudgingly, or of
 necessity"—and for the same reason he men-
 tions—"for God," says he, "loveth a cheerful
 giver."—So we may say no less truly; God
 loveth a servant, who does his duty cheerfully,
 and willingly.—And we may add, he will reward
 him accordingly. For so the apostle goes on
 in the text; "knowing," says he, "that whatso-
 ever good thing any man doth, the same shall
 he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or
 free." God, who is "no respecter of persons,"
 will most assuredly reward every man, without
 distinction, according to his deeds.—Our sta-
 tions and allotments in *this* life are indeed very
 different, and the good things of it (as they are
 called) are unequally distributed. But the trea-
 sures of the *next*, the riches and blessings of
 heaven, are open to all alike:—with regard to
 them, it matters not what our condition is here
 in *this* world;—if we do but our duty in that

state of life to which God has called us, we are sure of being happy hereafter, beyond all we can hope or conceive, to all eternity. Whether high or low, rich or poor, "bond or free," it makes no difference. We are all alike under God's notice; all equally accountable to him for our actions and behaviour; and all equally sure of being rewarded by him for our good conduct, or punished for our bad. The good and faithful servant, who acts from a religious principle, and with a willing mind; who serves his master honestly, and diligently; doing his duty to the best of his knowledge and ability; will generally find his account, and be rewarded, *in this world*. But be that as it may, he is certain that his services will not be forgotten or unrewarded in the *next*: where he will "enter into the joy of his Lord," and partake of it for ever and ever.

ADMONITION XVI.

TITUS ii. 9 and 10.

Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things: not answering again; not purloining; but shewing all good fidelity: that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

HAVING considered the duty of servants in general, we will now take a view of the several branches of it in particular. And for this purpose we cannot have a better guide than the exhortation of the Apostle in the text; which

which shews us both what is to be done, and what is to be avoided. In the first place, servants are "to be obedient unto their own masters,"—and of course to their mistresses; the same obligation binding them to one, as to the other: so that when one only is named, we are to understand, and apply the direction to, both. Now the very notion of servitude implies obedience. It is the master's part, to command; the servant's, to obey. You must always do what your master or mistress bids you. You must not dispute their orders, because you fancy them unreasonable, or hard to comply with; but you must endeavour to execute them in the best manner you can. When they tell you to do a thing *one* way, you must not attempt to do it *another*; because perhaps you think it easier or quicker. —No, they are much better judges than you, and they are the only proper judges how to have their own business done. It is your duty to do it as they direct; without murmuring, or disputing. You should obey them willingly, readily, and cheerfully; using your best endeavours (as the text directs) "to please them well in all things." You should not be content with barely following orders; with doing just what is required of you, and no more. You should be careful to do every thing in the best manner, and with the greatest dispatch, in your power; to shew that you take a pleasure in obliging those, whom you are bound to serve. For this end you should not always wait for *receiving* their orders; but endeavour to be *before-hand* with them, in doing what you think will

please them. A free and voluntary service is doubly pleasing and acceptable. To do what we are commanded, is an act of strict duty, as paying a debt is of strict justice. But to do a piece of service of our own accord, without being bid, is like a free gift, and will be valued accordingly. But don't mistake me. Though I compare it to a free gift, it is still our duty to *please*, as well as to *obey*: as it is, in like manner, our duty to be *generous*, as well as *just*. And if you have but a desire and inclination, you will never want opportunities of pleasing those you serve. Let it be your constant study and delight so to do.—The text now informs us, what we are *not* to do—"not answering again—not purloining." To answer again, signifies, to contradict, to argue, or dispute, a point with a master or mistress—or to give them pert and saucy answers. These are great faults, contrary to all the rules of good manners, contrary to the duty of servants; which I charge you to avoid. When you are spoken to, the less you say, the better. Receive your orders silently and submissively. When you are told of your faults, make no reply, except to say, you are sorry for having offended, and that you will do so no more.—And be sure to *do* as you *promise*. It is by actions, not by words, that you must shew your sorrow, and your amendment. After, "not answering again," follows, "not purloining." By "purloining," is meant every sort of theft, or dishonesty; which is not only a breach of duty, but a most abominable sin; every kind and degree of which you must keep clear

clear of, as you value your character, your life, or your salvation. In this, as in other sins, *little* offences lead to *great* ones; and he that begins with cheating and pilfering, will in time proceed to the higher crimes of theft and robbery, and most likely end his life at the gallows. Beware, therefore, I intreat you, of the first beginnings of this sin. Never take what belongs to another, be the thing ever so small or trifling. And particularly, never meddle with what belongs to your master or mistress; for this is a double crime; a breach of trust, as well as dishonesty. For you are required not only to serve and obey them, but (as the text goes on to instruct us) to shew them "all good fidelity"—that is, to be strictly faithful to them in the management of all their concerns—to make *their* interest your *own*—in short, to do by *them*, as you would they should do unto *you*, were you in their place, and they in your's.—This takes in a large compass of duty, and compleats the character of a good servant. Be faithful to them, therefore, in *every* thing—to their property, by making no waste, and improving every thing to the utmost of your power—and to their good name and reputation, by always speaking handsomely of them, and taking their part, if at any time you hear them slandered or abused. And as you are to serve them faithfully and obediently yourselves, so you are to use your best persuasions, and endeavours, to make your fellow-servants do the same.

The text concludes with a motive, or encouragement, to servants, for their general good behaviour:

behaviour: "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things"—that is, that by doing their duty in that state of life to which they are called, they may be an ornament to their profession, and do credit to the religion which teaches it.—But of this more in my next.

ADMONITION XVII.

TITUS ii. 10.—latter part.

———*That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

THE Apostle having laid down several excellent rules and directions to servants for the due discharge of their duty, enforces the observance of them from this powerful consideration; "that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." By "the doctrine of God our Saviour," we are to understand the religion of Christ: and whoever lives suitably to that religion, and regulates his life and behaviour by its holy laws and precepts, is said to "adorn" it; that is, to bring credit to it, or to be an ornament to his profession—a shining light, whereby others may be directed and led to follow his good example. And this is in the power of every Christian, without exception. Let his station in life be what it will, if he lives agreeably to it, and conscientiously performs the duties it requires, he may be said to *adorn* the doctrine or religion he professes: as, on the other hand, whoever lives unsuitably to his profession, whatever outward ornaments he may be distinguished

distinguished by, is a shame and disgrace to it; bringing a reproach, and scandal, on that holy name by which he is called. By "breaking the law," he is said to "dishonour God." So that it is not our rank or situation in life, but our good or bad behaviour in that situation, which is properly an ornament or disgrace to us. By doing our duty, we may adorn the *lowest*; by transgressing it, we may disgrace the *highest*. And this surely should be a great encouragement to servants to be active, and diligent, and faithful, in the discharge of their duty; as well as a great comfort to them, when they consider that they are thereby adorning the religion in which that duty is taught; that they bring credit, not to themselves only, but to their holy profession likewise; that by serving their earthly masters faithfully, they are doing an acceptable service to their master in heaven: that by promoting the interest of one, they are serving the cause of the other. Think, therefore, my good children, how much depends on your behaviour, and what you have to answer for, when you go into service: not only your own credit and reputation, but also that of the religion you have been brought up, and so carefully instructed, in, — which you will either recommend and promote by your good example, or disgrace and disparage by your bad one. And be not ashamed of your condition, as if it were mean and disgraceful. There is nothing mean but vice and sin; nothing shameful but wickedness and disobedience. A bad servant is indeed a scandal to his profession, and a pest of society: a good
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one is an ornament of the one, and a valuable member of the other. Look into your bible, and there you will see what is the true ornament of a Christian:—not *outward* show and finery, but that of “a meek and quiet spirit;” which, we are told, “is in the sight of God of great price;” and which is, in a peculiar manner, the distinguishing mark and character of a good servant. Our blessed Master, who, though he was Lord of all, “took upon him the form of a servant,” that we might follow the example of his great humility, left this admirable lesson to all his disciples: “Learn of me,” saye he; “for I am meek and lowly in heart.” And if HE, though he was the Son of God “learned,” and practised, “obedience” to man; surely *we* are doubly bound to obey those who are set over us, and to serve them truly and faithfully, as we are the servants of Christ.

Before I have done, I must desire your particular attention to the last words of the text—“*in all things*;” which imply, that our obedience to the commands of God, in whatever station we are, must be *general*, and *universal*. If we would adorn our profession, we must conform ourselves to it *in all things*: our *whole* life and conversation must be “such as becometh the gospel of Christ.” We must use our best endeavours to improve, and excel, in *every* part of our duty; that, as St. James expresses it, we “may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing.” For if we neglect any duty, or indulge ourselves in the practice of any vice or sin, we are a disgrace to our holy religion, and deserve not the name of Christians.

Christians. God, of his infinite mercy and goodness, has indeed offered "salvation unto all men" through Christ Jesus; but it is upon this express condition, that—"denying," or renouncing, all "ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" or, in the words of the text, that we should "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;"—always remembering, that the same divine Person who once came from heaven to *save* the world, will hereafter come to *judge* it; to call every one of us to account for our behaviour, and to reward or punish us according to our deeds. And God grant that this consideration may have its due weight and influence on us all! that in whatever station of life his providence shall place us, we may do the duties of that station faithfully and conscientiously;—not murmuring or repining, but content and thankful to the Giver of all goodness;—keeping constantly in view "the end of our faith," and obedience; "even the SALVATION OF OUR SOULS."

ADMONITION XVIII.

I TIMOTHY VI. 6.

Godliness with contentment is great gain.

THE desire of gain is common to most people; and if properly directed, and kept within due bounds, it serves as a spur to industry, and ought not to be discouraged. But let me ask, *What is gain?* and how is it to be acquired?

acquired? Does it consist merely in wealth, and what are called the good things of *this* life? No; these are but a small portion of it; of inferior value, and of very uncertain tenure; and should therefore be but the *secondary* objects of our pursuit. In order to judge rightly, and act properly, in this business, let us consult the word of God. "WISDOM," says Solomon (by which he always means religion, or godliness) "is the principal thing, therefore GET WISDOM; and with all thy getting GET UNDERSTANDING." And the apostle, in the text, tells us, that "godliness with contentment is great gain." *Without* it, all the riches in the world could give us no real comfort or happiness; and *with* it, we cannot fail to be happy even in the lowest and poorest condition. "The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." It is a "pearl of great price;" a treasure of inestimable value; which we may all obtain if we please. We cannot all be rich, or great: but we may all be godly: we may all be contented.——Let us consider the text a little more particularly: it will afford us much matter of useful instruction.

The word "godliness," signifies properly the same as piety, or a right disposition of the heart towards God. But we may look upon it here as including the *whole* of our duty, which indeed naturally flows from a truly pious heart. For whoever sincerely loves God, will love his brother also; and will endeavour to serve and please God by a general obedience to all his commandments.

commandments. Now one great part of our duty, is contentment; so that there can be no true godliness without it. The apostle therefore joins them together, and recommends them under the notion of "great gain" or profit: as he says in another part of the same epistle, that "godliness is *profitable* unto *all* things"—it is the greatest gain we can be possessed of—"having" (as he goes on to inform us) "promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The advantages attending it in this life are many and great. Generally, health of body; and always, peace of mind. A good name, which, Solomon says, "is rather to be chosen than great riches;" and oftentimes a good share of wealth besides. And in the next life the gain is certain, and unspeakably great. "To him that soweth righteousness shall be a **SURE REWARD.**"

Again: as godliness, in general, is represented by the apostle as so gainful and beneficial to us; so that particular part of it, "contentment," as he plainly intimates, contributes not a little to the profits attending it. "A good man" (who must be a contented man) "is satisfied from himself." He has a source of comfort within him, independent of fortune, and of all outward accidents or circumstances, that never fails him. His wants are few, and they are easily supplied. His desires are moderate, and they are soon satisfied. He wisely considers that as he "brought nothing into this world, it is certain he can carry nothing out." "Having food and raiment, he is therewith content;"
thankful,

thankful, and happy. A stranger to the cares of covetousness, the pangs of ambition, and the tortures of envy; he enjoys what he has, nor is eagerly solicitous for more. Ever trusting in the gracious providence and love of Him, who has promised that he will never leave, or forsake, his faithful servants.

You see, then, what is the *true* interest of man; the "GREAT GAIN," which he ought always to have in view, and to pursue with his utmost care and diligence. You may observe, too, how St. Paul, in imitation of his blessed Master, takes every opportunity of pointing it out to us, and of exhorting us to "follow after godliness;" and, after his own example, "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." But you are not to suppose that either our Saviour, or his apostle, forbids a *moderate* attention to what we call our *worldly* interest, or a well-regulated pursuit of *worldly* gain. "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," plainly directs us to make religion, and the blessings of heaven, our *principal* care and concern; but as plainly allows us, in a second and subordinate view, to attend to the good things of *this* life. Labour and industry in our worldly callings are not only permitted, but enjoined, us. He that neglects to "provide for his own household," or family, is, in St. Paul's judgment, "worse than an infidel." We are directed to be "*content* with food and raiment;" that is, with the bare necessities of life; but we are not forbid to use our honest endeavours to obtain the comforts and conveniences of it. In a word, we are allowed

lowed to *use* this world, and the good things of it, soas we do not *abuse* them: remembering always, that our true and lasting treasure is in heaven. And where our treasure is, there may our hearts be also.

ADMONITION XIX.

REVELATION xxi. 8—latter part.

ALL LIARS shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

EVERY sin is an offence against God, and exposes the sinner to his anger and punishment. But there are some sins particularly hateful to him, and which will be punished by him with more than ordinary severity. Of this sort is lying. It is a sin above all others vile and abominable, as it proceeds from a most wicked and corrupt heart, and is in a particular manner the work of the Devil, who is called “a liar, and the father of lies.” And accordingly we find it in scripture spoken of in the strongest terms of detestation; and all liars ranked with the very worst sort of sinners, and subjected to the severest wrath and vengeance of God.—“Lying lips,” says Solomon, “are abomination to the Lord.” And in the text you may observe, liars are joined with “murderers, and whoremongers, and forcerers, and idolaters;” and are doomed to partake of their punishment in the world to come. And again, in the same chapter ver. 27, it is written; “There shall
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in no wise enter into it" (that is, into heaven) "any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or **MAKETH A LIE.**" And again, Ch. xxii. 15, "Without," (that is, in hell) "are dogs, and forcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and *whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*" It is observable that liars and murderers are here put together, forasmuch as lying and murder are two of the most heinous sins, and as they both proceed from the devil, and make men resemble him, more perhaps than any other sins whatever. For the devil (as our Saviour tells us) "was a murderer from the beginning," as well as "a liar;" as he by his lies caused our first parents to commit that sin, which brought death upon them and their posterity. So that as he was the father of lies, he was, properly speaking, the author of death, or the murderer of mankind. And whoever follows him in his wicked practices, and particularly in this worst of wickedness, lying; will most assuredly share with him in his punishment, and will have that dreadful sentence pronounced on him at the day of judgment; "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"—which is what is called in the text "*the second death*"—and is always spoken of in scripture as a state of continual torment, and of extreme and endless misery. But it is not in the *next* world only that liars are punished. They commonly, if not always, suffer severely in *this*. Lying is above all other sins hateful to man, as well as to God. Other offenders often meet with pity,
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and sometimes with favour more than they deserve; but liars are hated by every body without distinction, and shunned as the vilest of wretches, and the pests of society. Hear what the Psalmist says of them. "I hate and abhor lying. He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight." And the reason of it is plain. For lying shews a most wicked and depraved heart, a mean and base spirit, a disposition to all manner of fraud and iniquity.—Other sinners may have some good qualities to recommend them: a liar has none. Against other bad persons we may be upon our guard: but one is never safe with a liar, His "throat is an open sepulchre: the poison of asps is under his lips." And he spreads his poison far and wide, wherever he goes. His delight is to do mischief, to destroy characters, and to breed quarrels and dissensions. No wonder then that so base and wicked a creature should be despised and abhorred by every body; and that the name of liar should be reckoned the greatest mark of infamy and reproach that any person can bear.

And now, my good children, *think* only (God forbid you should ever *know*) what a life a liar must lead, and what he must feel—mistrusted; never believed, not even if he speaks truth; despised, scorned, hated, by all mankind. Always in danger, always in fear, of being found out, and meeting with the due reward of his wickedness. No friend to help or comfort him in his distress; and the pangs of a guilty conscience continually tormenting him—till at last
death

death delivers him over to the heaviest and severest punishments of the world to come.

“Wherefore,” to use the words of the Apostle, “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour”—that is, with *every* body—for we are *all* neighbours, in the scripture language, and *all* of us “members one of another.” Speak the truth at all times, without any mixture of deceit or reserve. If you have committed a fault at any time, don’t conceal or deny it; because that is committing a still greater, and adding sin to sin. But own it; acknowledge it; ask pardon for it; and resolve never to do so again. This is the sure way, and the only way, to be forgiven, both by God and man. And I charge you, above all things, never to lay your own fault upon another, who is innocent; for that is a double lie, and a great injury, added to lying. But then take notice, on the other hand, that you must not tell a lie to screen any body that is in fault, or to save him from punishment—for this is a false good-nature; and lying is always a fault, and a sin, whatever may be the end proposed by it. In this, as in every other case, there is one sure rule to go by; we must not “do evil that good may come.” We must not endeavour to screen, or serve any body at the expence of truth.

Lastly; every kind of deceit whatsoever, whether by word or action, partakes of the nature and guilt of lying, and will be punished accordingly. As murderers and liars are joined together in scripture, so are bloody and deceitful men. “Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing” (that is, liars) “the Lord will abhor the
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the bloody and deceitful man," Psalm v. 6—
and again, lv. 23.—But while these, and all
other wicked persons, " shall be turned into
hell;" let us remember for our comfort that
whosoever "walketh uprightly," or lives a good
and honest life, and speaketh the truth from his
heart; that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor
doeth evil to his neighbour;" he " shall abide in
the tabernacle of the Lord, and dwell in his
holy hill," that is, in heaven, for ever and ever.

ADMONITION XX.

EXODUS xxiii. 2—former part.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

BEWARE OF BAD EXAMPLES.—You are now
young; and, I trust, as to any great of-
fences, innocent. But you will soon enter into
a wicked world, where you will meet with a
multitude of evil-doers: who, not content with
being wicked themselves, will endeavour to
draw in others, to be their companions in sin.
They will take advantage of your ignorance and
inexperience; will laugh at you, perhaps, for
being good and virtuous; and use all their arts
and persuasions to make you as bad as them-
selves. Therefore, I say unto you again, BE-
WARE. In your bible you will find many ear-
nest and powerful warnings to this purpose.
Let me beg of you to give them the attention
they deserve, and to treasure them up in your
minds—" My son," says Solomon, " if sin-

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ners entice thee, consent thou not. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass away." For "the words of the wicked are to lie in wait for blood;" and their "counsels are deceit." So again, in the New Testament—"Be not deceived," says St. Paul: "evil communications corrupt good manners." And St. Peter: "Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness."

To answer the gracious end and design of God in these cautions and admonitions, was our first view and purpose in setting up these Sunday-schools. It was to keep you out of bad ways, and from following bad examples; as our next was, to train you up in the right way, in the paths of religion and virtue. And as there is no day when more bad examples are to be found, and more evil going forward than on Sunday; perhaps none, that is spent so idly and shamefully by the wicked; we thought it the first step to be taken to bring you, on that sacred day, into this place of instruction, and to see you go regularly to church—to see you "go with the multitude," not of evil-doers, but of such as the Psalmist speaks of, who go "to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise," to keep his day holy. So far we have the pleasure to think we have done our duty, and you your's. But it will signify little, that you spend *Sunday* well, unless you spend the whole week well likewise. The good instructions you receive

ceive on *this* day are designed to regulate your conduct *every* day: for every day in the week has its proper business and employment belonging to it, as well as Sunday. "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work"—which it is as much your duty to do, faithfully and diligently, as it is to keep holy the seventh. And as you are commanded on all days alike, to do what is right and good, so are you forbid to do what is wrong and evil. The warning, or prohibition, in the text belongs to *every* day; to every hour and minute of the day. It should never be out of our thoughts. For there is always, and ever will be, a multitude of evil-doers; and we are always in danger of being led away by them. You must therefore be always upon your guard. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." When you say the Lord's prayer, in particular (which I hope you do, seriously and devoutly, every day of your lives) you should earnestly beseech God to "deliver you from evil;"—that is, not only from the devil, who is called the *evil one*, as he is the author and promoter of all wickedness; but also from evil men, who are his children and instruments; that you may not follow, or be led astray by, them. And to your prayers you must in this, as in every other case, join your own hearty endeavours, and use all your care and watchfulness, for the same purpose. Avoid all bad people as much as you can. If they follow you, turn away: shun them as you would a plague or pestilence. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of dark-

ness;" that is, with the workers of wickedness. Have no familiarity, no intimacy, with them. If you have, depend on it you will catch their wicked ways, and be ruined. It was a wise and noble resolution of David, that he "would not *know* a wicked person." The meaning is, that he would shew them no countenance or favour; would not suffer such to "dwell within his house," or even to "tarry in his sight."—My good children, as you advance in life, you must expect to meet with many wicked persons: but when you know them to be so, have nothing to say, or to do with them; lest you add to the multitude of evil doers. You are warned of your danger betimes. Thank God that you are so, and make a right use of the warning. Believe me, it will be no excuse for you in the day of judgment, to say that the number of sinners was great, and that you did only as others did. Remember, the text is plain and positive;—no words can be plainer—"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." The *number* of sinners can never alter the *nature* of sin, or screen the sinner from the wrath and punishment of God. As, on the contrary, the way of holiness will no less surely lead to his favour, and to eternal happiness, however "few there may be that find it." Be ye therefore followers of them, who through faith, and well doing, shall "inherit the promises:" knowing, that whoever you follow in this world, the same you must follow in the world to come: either the wicked "into everlasting punishment;" or "the righteous into life eternal."

ADMONITION XXI.

HEBREWS xiii. 16.

To do good, and to communicate, forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

AMONG the Jews, sacrifices made a great part of their religious worship. God Almighty ordained them for wise and good purposes ; partly, as a token of their subjection and obligation to Him, as their supreme Lord and law-giver ; but (as it is generally supposed) principally, to lead their thoughts, and direct their faith, towards the great sacrifice, that was one day to be offered for all mankind. Since the offering of this all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ on the cross, others have entirely ceased : except only the figurative sacrifice of an holy and good life, which was always, and ever will be, of high value in the sight of God. Even under the law he declared that “ obedience was better than sacrifice ;” and that he desired “ mercy,” and the knowledge of God (that is, the *practical* knowledge of him, or obedience to his will) “ more than burnt offerings.” Under the Gospel, as I said, that is the only sacrifice required : and it is absolutely and indispensably required ; both as an evidence of our gratitude to God, and as the condition of our reaping the benefit of the sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer. “ I beseech you therefore, brethren,” (says St. Paul) “ by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," and in like manner, in the text ; " To do good, and to communicate, forget not : for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

But you will say perhaps, How does this precept concern *you*?—how can *you* do good in your *low* station of life? or what have you to spare to give to *others*, who have so little of *your own*, and are obliged to work for your daily bread?—I hope to shew you very plainly, that you have it in your power to do *much* good; and if you have, it certainly is your duty to do it. I hope too to convince you, that you may have opportunities of communicating, or parting with, something to others more needy than yourselves, and when you have, you certainly ought to lay hold on them.

In the first place, I would have you observe, that every good person, whatever his station may be, is an useful member of society, and therefore does good to it. In the body of Christians, as in the natural body, every member, from the highest to the lowest, has his proper office assigned him; which if he fills, and discharges the duties of it, as he ought, he in some sort contributes to the good of the whole. Besides, he does good by his example. It is an old and a true remark, that example is more powerful than precept: so apt are we to catch the manners of those we keep company with. As a wicked man has more to answer for than his own sins, by the influence of his bad example
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on others: so a good one has the pleasure to reflect, that besides his own virtues, he has been the happy instrument of raising, or forwarding, the like good seeds among his neighbours. There is a very strong and beautiful expression to this purpose in the epistle to the Hebrews; where the apostle exhorts them to "*provoke* unto love, and to good works"—that is, to stir up, to excite, to cause a sort of contention and emulation, one with another, in the discharge of kind and good offices.—Thus much in general.

But to be more particular.—You may all of you do good to your parents, and other relations, by working for them, and being of service to them in an hundred different ways, too many to mention in this place. You may, in like manner, do good to your friends and neighbours, in a variety of instances. You may attend the sick; assist the helpless; comfort the afflicted. Children and young people, by their quickness and activity, may often be of great use in helping those that are older; and when they shew a ready disposition to be so, their services are doubly acceptable. The affectionate and dutiful attention of a son, or daughter, cheers the heart of a parent, and in that respect may be said to do him good. Love and kindness to a brother, or sister, or neighbour, is always pleasing, and is often of real benefit. In short, if you are really inclined, and desirous, to do good, you will never want opportunities of doing it. The whole life of our blessed Saviour was so employed. We are told, that he "went

about doing good ;” and it is our duty, and should be our constant endeavour, to follow his example.

The other part of the direction in the text is, “not to forget to communicate,”—that is, to remember to give, or impart, to others, somewhat of our own, which they may stand in need of. And this you may all do, more or less, however small your portion may be of this world’s goods: for there are few so poor, but others are poorer. Nor will your gift, however slender, be without its value or reward. Remember, how highly the widow’s two mites were prized by our Lord, as it was “all that she had;” and therefore she was considered by him as casting in more than all the rich, who contributed only a small portion out of their abundance. And remember what he says upon another occasion: “Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”

ADMONITION XXII.

PSALM xxxix. 1.

I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue.

A TRULY wise saying, and pious resolution, which we ought all of us to follow. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips;" was David's prayer, and should be our's. For as "in many things we offend all;" so there is none, perhaps, in which we are so liable and apt to offend, as in our speech, or with our tongue. The offences of it are so various, and the opportunities of committing them so frequent, that it requires all our care and circumspection to guard against them. And happy the man who has so far the command of himself as to keep clear of them. For "if any man offend not in word," says the apostle, "the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." By the mastery of his tongue, he shews that he can subdue all his irregular passions and appetites; and comes as near as may be to the character of perfection, or to that of a good and compleat Christian.

I shall point out to you the several sins, or offences of the tongue: and may God give you grace to avoid them!

The first, and highest, of these is cursing and swearing; a sin of the most heinous nature, for

which there is not the least shadow of excuse. I really want words to describe the excessive wickedness of it. It is setting the Almighty at defiance ; daring his vengeance ; and offering him the grossest insult. It is, besides, the greatest breach of charity to our fellow creatures. One would think it the sin of *devils*, rather than of *men*. The tongue of the swearer may be truly said to be “ set on fire of hell.”

Another offence of the mouth against God, is the using his name carelessly and inconsiderately in common conversation. This is certainly inconsistent with that respect, and reverence, which is due to him. Even to say, Good God ! or Oh Lord ! or any such expression, is wrong and disrespectful. The sacred names of God, and of Christ, should never be used but in prayer, or on some very solemn occasion.

The next sin of the tongue I shall mention, is that of slandering, or abusing, our neighbour. And, however common the practice, it is always spoken of in scripture as a sin of the deepest dye. “ Whisperers, and backbiters ;” are placed by St. Paul among the very worst of sinners—“ haters of God,” as well as injurious to men. And in another black catalogue of wicked persons, he says expressly, that “ revilers” *shall not* “ inherit the kingdom of God.” Slandering, or spreading false reports of another, is the worst sort of that abominable sin of lying ; which having treated of in a discourse by itself, I shall say nothing more of it at present : but shall rather caution you against that kind of evil speaking,
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which tho' perhaps it keeps within the bounds of truth, is still hurtful to our neighbour, and therefore condemned in scripture, as a breach of our duty to him. Under this head is included all uncharitable and censorious discourse—whatever tends to hurt another's reputation, or to give him uneasiness. Accordingly, St. Paul charges Titus to admonish his disciples, “to speak evil of no man”—and again: “to be no brawlers”—that is, to use no angry, or quarrelsome, language—which is another offence of the tongue; contrary to all the rules of good manners; destructive of peace, and good neighbourhood; and directly opposite to the spirit, and precepts, of our holy religion; which requires us to be “gentle, meek, and courteous.” And here let me particularly warn you against all rude and disrespectful language to your superiors; especially to your parents, and to your masters and mistresses. They are intitled not barely to civility, but to your dutiful submission, and respect. I charge you never to give them a pert or saucy answer; never to shew any resentment at what they say to you, but to receive their orders, and take their reproofs, silently and quietly, as becomes good children and servants: always remembering, that if you offend against your parents, or masters, *on earth*, you offend at the same time against your father, and master, who is *in heaven*.

Another sin of the tongue is lewd or indecent discourse; what the apostle calls “filthy communication.” Let no such ever come out of

your mouth: and if others use it, turn away from them; for they are most dangerous companions. It is a very great sin, and of the worst consequence; proceeding from a corrupt and wicked heart, and leading to every thing that is shameful and abominable: to what "ought not to be named," much less practised, among Christians.

The last offence I shall mention is that of vain, idle, or foolish talking; which, we are told, is "not convenient," that is, unbecoming, unsuitable to the character of a Christian. It is certainly a less fault than the others I have mentioned. But then observe, that, as little faults lead to great ones, so much foolish discourse generally ends in what is wicked and criminal. It is, at best, a great waste of time, and hindrance of business: according to a vulgar but true saying, that great *talkers* are little *doers*. And Solomon tells us, "that in the multitude of words there wanteth not sin." But what I wish you chiefly to attend to, and often seriously to think of, is that awful declaration of our blessed Saviour, with which I shall conclude. "I say unto you, that every *idle* word that men speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment—For by thy words thou shalt be justified; and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

ADMONITION XXIII.

PSALM CXIX. 6.

*Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect
unto all thy commandments.*

SHAME is the natural consequence of sin. So it was with our first parents. While they were innocent, we read that they "were not ashamed;" but no sooner had they disobeyed the divine command, than shame and confusion followed. They were "afraid," and hid themselves. Now shame is always accompanied with pain and uneasiness. And it is wisely so ordered by our good and gracious Creator, in order to keep us from sinning: that as we all wish to avoid pain, we should avoid shame which is the cause of it; and refrain from sin, as it is the cause of shame. Do you then desire *not* to be ashamed? Follow the advice of the holy Psalmist Do your duty—obey God in all things—and "then," you may say in the words of the text, "I shall not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments."

My first advice to you therefore is "that ye sin not"—that you do nothing to be ashamed of: for there is nothing we ought to be ashamed of but sin. However, since, notwithstanding all your care and endeavours, you will sometimes fail in your duty; my next advice is, that when-
ever

ever you do offend, you take shame to yourselves for so doing. For shame leads to sorrow, and sorrow (if it be sincere) to amendment. There is a *godly* shame, as well as "a godly sorrow" (as the apostle calls it), which "worketh repentance." Be ashamed therefore of having done wrong; but never be ashamed of owning it. If you confess your faults, with shame and concern, and with a firm resolution of never committing the like again, they will be forgiven you. To be without shame, or without feeling, for one's sins, is a sure sign of a most depraved and hardened heart. One part of St. Paul's description of the most abandoned men is, that they glory "in their shame,"—or boast of those sins which they ought to be ashamed of.

But there is a false and bad shame, too common among all, and especially among young people, which I must caution you against, as being destructive of all virtue and goodness. I mean, a shame of doing one's duty. Hear what our Saviour says of it: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come" to judgment. Think only, what it is, to be ashamed of Christ, and to have Christ ashamed of you. Surely you must be shocked at the thought of it, and tremble at the consequence: to hear him say, at that awful day, "I know you not—depart from me."—Now to be ashamed of the "words" of Christ, is to be ashamed of living according to the laws and
rules

rules of his gospel: and this is, in fact, being ashamed of Christ himself. It is disowning him for our Lord and Master. For it signifies nothing to acknowledge him with our *mouths*, if we deny him by our *actions*. "If a man love me," says he, "he will keep my words:" which no one can do, who is ashamed of them. This false shame is like that false fear, which is condemned and forbidden in scripture, as inconsistent with a religious and good life. "The fear of man," says Solomon, "bringeth a snare." And God himself says, by the prophet Isaiah, "Fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings." In both places are meant bad and wicked men, who will laugh at the good and upright for their virtue and godliness, and try by their infamous ridicule, and reproaches, to make them as bad as themselves. But never, I charge you, be afraid of them, or of their revilings. Never be ashamed of serving God, and doing your duty. Good men will love and esteem you for it, and God will reward you. "Them that honour him," he has declared that "he will honour." Though you may be despised and scoffed at on earth by the wicked and profane, you will be honoured in heaven before men and angels, and receive "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." This world is a state of trial; and bad men are a trial to the good. They are a snare to us in many respects; but in none perhaps more, than by endeavouring to give a wrong turn to those principles of shame and fear, which our Maker has implanted

implanted in us for the wisest and best purposes. A sense of shame was designed to keep us from sin; or, if we have sinned, to lead us to repentance. The fear of God was intended to keep us from offending him; to make us "hate evil," and "have respect unto all his commandments." Quite contrary to these are the false shame and fear, which the wicked wish, and endeavour, to instil into us: a shame of doing our duty, and a fear of being laughed at for it. But we may rest assured, for our comfort, that God, who suffers us to be thus tried, will carry us safe through the trial, if we pray to him for his grace and assistance, and join thereto our own hearty endeavours. He has warned us of our danger, and shown us how to escape it. While we trust in his power and goodness, and do our best to serve him in all holy and godly living, we have nothing to fear, and can have nothing to be ashamed of. Let us therefore, after the example of St. Paul, approve ourselves in all things as the faithful Servants of God; "by honour, and dishonour; by evil report, and good report."—little solicitous about the treatment we meet with in *this* world; but "looking," with faith and patience, "for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," who shall "reward every man according to his works."

ADMONITION XXIV.

To the P A R E N T S.

EPHESIANS VI. 4.

— *Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

THE great usefulness and necessity of a virtuous and religious education (which the apostle here enforces) are so very apparent, that I should hope it were needless to say any thing to you in proof or confirmation of it. But the misfortune is, that the plainest truths, though ever so important, are often overlooked and disregarded; perhaps merely because they are plain. Let me however intreat you to consider, seriously and frequently, how much it is both your duty and interest, to bring up your children in the ways of godliness, virtue, and industry; and how much your own happiness, as well as their's, in this life, as well as in the next, will depend upon it. You seem indeed to be sensible of this, by sending your children to partake of the instructions of our school: and so far you do well. But alas! all we can do for them will signify little, unless you join your endeavours to our's to "train them up," and keep them, "in the way wherein they should go;" and above all, unless you confirm by *your example* what they learn from *our precepts*. Children will imitate

imitate their parents ; and if they see at *home* a practice and behaviour quite contrary to what they are taught at *school*, our labour will be lost, and our best advice thrown away upon them. For their sakes, therefore, as well as for your own, let me beg of you to be particularly circumspect both in your words and actions : to refrain from every vicious and bad course, and to be patterns of whatever is good and praiseworthy. Watch carefully over their behaviour, and when you see any thing wrong, check it immediately, that it may not grow into a bad habit. If at any time you observe a disposition to lying, deceit, or thieving, reprove them sharply ; and if words will not do, you must have recourse to the rod. But for lesser faults, and carelessness, a gentle and mild reproof is to be preferred. Hear them sometimes read ; and try, if possible, to make them remember what they read. Hear them say their prayers ; and take care that they say them slowly, deliberately, and devoutly : the Lord's prayer particularly so, (*See Admonition VII.*) And do not forget, I intreat you, to add your own prayers to their's, and to our's, that it would please God to prosper the work we are engaged in ; to make your children good and useful members of society ; a blessing and comfort to their parents and friends.

ADMONITION XXV.

To the PARENTS and others.

I COR. v. 8.

Let us keep the feast.

IT is much to be lamented, that the festivals of the church, which were designed to answer the best purposes, are, by a sad perversion of them, made to serve the worst. Of these there is none perhaps so grossly abused, or so scandalously profaned, as that of Christmas. A season wisely set apart for the commemoration of our blessed Lord's coming into the world, to "*destroy* the works of the Devil," is by too many made the occasion of *promoting* them: and CHRIST, the great pattern and preacher of holiness, is thereby made "the minister of sin." What are commonly called (and would properly be so called, if rightly observed) the Christmas *holy* days, become, by this shameful abuse of them, the most *unholy* of all the days in the year: being spent in sloth and idleness, in rioting and drunkenness, and in all manner of vice and debauchery. When we are called upon more particularly to remember our Saviour, and his exceeding great love and mercy towards us, we seem most of all to forget him, and to forfeit all pretensions to his favour. When (as the apostle directs, and as our church teaches

teaches us to pray) we should "*put off* the works of darkness," or sin, we *run into them* "with greediness:" and when we ought, with peculiar care and zeal, to "*put on* the Lord Jesus Christ," (that is, to adorn ourselves with every Christian grace and virtue) we may be said to put him off, and by our conduct to renounce our holy profession. Instead of observing a *Christian* festival, we seem to copy after the *heathenish* rites of the ancient Romans; who held a feast at the latter end of December, in which they were allowed to commit all sorts of excess and licentiousness. They indeed had ignorance to plead, and in some sense acted in character, as being followers of false gods, who were in fact the instruments of Satan, and consequently the patrons of sin. But we, who worship the true God, know better, and are therefore without excuse. We know that by every sin we commit, we "blaspheme that worthy," and holy, "name by which we are called." Better, I am sure, far better it would be, that there were no holydays at all, than that they should be kept in such a manner as they are. Better to *forget* the birth of Christ altogether, than to *pretend to remember* it, and at the same time to act in direct opposition to the end and design of it. St. Paul, warning the Ephesians against the disorderly and vicious people of his days, says, "it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them *in secret*." Surely it is a great shame to see and hear the things which are done and spoken by the rioters of our time *openly*, and in *public*;

public ; and this at a season set apart for the exercise of religion and good works. It is shocking—it is scandalous——But let *us*, my brethren, “keep the feast” (every festival of our church in general, and this most sacred one of Christmas in particular) in a manner suitable to its nature and solemnity. Let us keep it, as the apostle directs, in “sincerity and truth,” that is, as an holy and religious feast. Besides attending the public offices of the church, let us meditate in private on the great and undeserved blessings as at this time derived from heaven, and consider how we may make a right use of them, and a proper return for them. Let us employ our time, and our thoughts (a more delightful employment there cannot be) in contemplating the love of God in sending his only-begotten Son into the world, to live, and to die, for us : and the love of Christ in coming, and giving himself a ransom and sacrifice for us. Let us silently admire and adore, as well as celebrate in the congregation of the faithful, the exceeding riches and wonders of his love and goodness towards us. And let it be our peculiar study at *this* time, as it should be our constant endeavour at *all* times, to live as becomes the redeemed of the Lord. Kind and good offices to one another, *always* indeed seasonable, are *now* more particularly so. “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another ;” and to shew our love by our actions. Our dear Redeemer, during his abode on earth, “went
about

about doing good." Let us follow his example, while we commemorate his birth.

But, you may say perhaps, "are our holidays to be passed wholly in acts of piety and charity?" Certainly not. Some time may, and ought to, be allowed for the social meeting, the cheerful meal, and friendly conversation. Christmas is justly accounted a joyful season, and ought to be kept as such. "Let the righteous" (*now* more especially) "be glad and rejoice before God: let them also be merry and joyful." And, believe me, none but the righteous can be truly so.—To conclude: Do your duty to God and men; enjoy the company of your friends and neighbours; eat and drink with strict temperance and sobriety; and then you will not fail to have, what I heartily wish you, A COMFORTABLE AND AN HAPPY CHRISTMAS.

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